

Rochester Institute of Technology RIT Scholar Works

Theses

Thesis/Dissertation Collections

8-2018

Special Interest Magazine Publishers' Digital Strategies for Reader Engagement

Patricia Axford
pa5636@rit.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses>

Recommended Citation

Axford, Patricia, "Special Interest Magazine Publishers' Digital Strategies for Reader Engagement" (2018). Thesis. Rochester Institute of Technology. Accessed from

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Thesis/Dissertation Collections at RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact ritscholarworks@rit.edu.

**Special Interest Magazine Publishers' Digital Strategies for Reader
Engagement**

By Patricia Axford

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Science in Print Media in the School of Media Sciences

In the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences

of the Rochester Institute of Technology

August 2018

Primary Thesis Advisor: Bruce Leigh Myers, Ph.D.

Secondary Thesis Advisor: Professor Michael Riordan

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my friends and family for all of the support they have offered me through this process. I really appreciate everyone's sacrifices in order to allow me to succeed in this venture. I will not forget it.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Table of Contents	ii
List of Figures	iii
List of Tables	iv
Abstract	v
Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
Background	1
Problem	7
Reason for Interest	10
Chapter 2	11
Theoretical Basis	11
Chapter 3	16
Literature Review	16
The Status of the Magazine Publishing Industry	17
Business Models in Transition	19
Interactivity	25
Business Strategies	29
Chapter 4	38
Research Objectives	38
Chapter 5	39
Method	39
Sample Selection	39
Survey Instrument	40
Data Analysis	42
Limitations	43
Results	44

Overview	44
Chapter 7	60
Summary and Conclusions	60
Analysis and Conclusions.....	60
Implications and Future Research.....	65
Bibliography.....	68
Glossary	73
Appendices	75

List of Figures

Figure 1: Scatter plot indicating small publishers average number of hours dedicated to a standard digital edition of a magazine	58
Figure 2: Scatter plot indicating large publishers average number of hours dedicated to a standard digital edition of a magazine	58

List of Tables

Table 1: Electronic Platforms Utilized.	45
Table 2: Primary Motivation for the Creation of the Digital Edition.....	47
Table 3: Benefits Realized from the Digital Edition.....	48
Table 4: Tools Utilized to Understand Reader Base.....	49
Table 5: Primary Goal of Social Media	50
Table 6: Ranked benefits of interactivity.....	51
Table 7: Primary Motive for the Development of Interactive Features	52
Table 8: Primary Motive for the Inclusion of Interactive Features	52
Table 9: Main drivers behind the development of interactive features.....	53
Table 10: Main Drivers Behind the Inclusion of Interactive Features.....	53
Table 11: Factors for Advancement in Inclusion of Interactive Features Ranked	55
Table 12: Size of Staff Focused on the Digital Edition.....	55
Table 13: Number of Titles Produced versus Staff Dedicated to the Creation of Editions	56

Abstract

This research study is intended to examine the strategies that special interest magazine publishers are utilizing to develop engaging reader experiences. In addition, the role of reader input in the curation and creation of interactive content for these publications is also investigated. Published research has indicated that reader interest in specific topics increases the likelihood of engagement with the publication, resulting in prolonged readership. Furthermore, studies suggest that interactivity has a positive effect on entertainment value, visual appeal, service excellence, and a return on investment with regard to readers. Digital technologies enable publishers to provide readers with bundled offerings with the printed edition together with tablet edition and enhanced content. In addition, it is recognized that although publishers can benefit from information gathered from data tracking of their readers' behavior, based on the extensive review of the literature, no found research investigated the specific tools or strategies that special interest magazine publishers are using to increase readership and engagement in digital platforms. Using a cross-sectional survey methodology, this study defined the specific tools and strategies that are being used by special interest magazine publishers in order to serve and expand their readership.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This research aimed to examine important aspects of the impact of digital technologies in the area of special interest periodical publications. For the purpose of this study, special interest magazines are described as magazines with a specifically targeted audience with narrowly focused content targeting consumers with similar lifestyles or interests. In essence, special interest magazines are periodicals on specific topics for very specific readers. Large circulation special interest magazines include many automotive titles, smaller circulation special interest titles include those for particular hobbies. The magazine publication industry has undergone a paradigm shift, largely due to the impact of digital distribution technologies and broadband access to content.

Background

The widespread use of the Internet in recent decades can be viewed as a defining moment in the history of media, and it could be argued that no media been more affected than the publication sector. There was now an opportunity to communicate to anyone in the world, anonymously, who was a part of the Internet network. The evolution of the web has led it to become more

sophisticated in its quality, reliability and convenience, and it has become incalculably more popular (Coates, 2002).

While it is widely recognized that publications traditionally distributed through print media have seen their offerings diminished in recent decades, opportunities remain, particularly in niche markets. Weible (2009) notes that the widespread use of computers and cellphones as electronic news aggregator sources resulted in almost 8,000 job cuts and 65 newspapers closing in that year alone. Despite the dire situation, some newspaper publishers realized that the use of niche publishing in the form of hyper-local news could increase readership and advertising revenue in the face of increasing competition from electronic news sources. In January of 2008, the president of Gannett's newspaper division stated that niche publications hone in on difficult to reach audiences and provide a "ready vehicle" for advertisers that were heretofore attained (Weible, 2009). In a cross-sectional survey, Weible (2009) concludes that adopting niche publishing resulted in increased readership of nearly 19% together with an increase in advertising revenue. Further, many took note when Berkshire Hathaway, led by Warren Buffett, invested heavily in newspapers. In 2013, Buffett believed papers will remain viable for a long time if the newspaper delivers comprehensive and reliable information to tightly bound communities and employ a sensible Internet strategy (Rieder, 2016).

The abundance of free content on the Internet could represent new revenue sources for publishers, to make this emergence of digital technologies profitable as well as beneficial to readers through a focus on a customized content strategy. It is generally recognized that early magazine websites were not especially well executed, however, experiences gained in these nascent efforts could play a key role in developing strategies for all magazine publishers, with the special interest sector being no exception.

When the Internet became an omnipresent part of daily life magazine publishers did not seem to initiate the chance to reach a global audience. An article in *Publishing Research Quarterly* (vol 4, 2013) indicated that the first magazine websites contained content deemed unsuitable for the print editions and as an essential “dumping ground” for anything that did not fit the layout. Even as E-commerce became more prevalent, publishers shied away at the opportunity to capitalize in online business ventures. Resources including the requisite personnel were not sufficiently dedicated to web development. Tomas (2013) notes priorities should be given to the concept of publishing on a tablet or smart phone because it really embodies that “lean back” reading experience that people associate with magazines. This could prove to be a key factor in the success of magazine publishing by creating an ideal reader experience through a tool readers frequently use.

The emergence of e-Readers with broadband access has also forced the magazine publishing industry to rethink business strategies. Presently, content can be accessed readily online, and in many cases at low- to-no cost. Digital content has become easier to access due to these devices becoming more affordable and easier to use; as such, technology has made many advances since the first electronic devices which has allowed mobile phones to function as an e-readers (Moss, 2010). Lichtenberg (2011) suggests that publishers have a need for a service business model instead of a model focused on selling “scarce physical commodities.” This model involves using reader needs and expectations to tailor the service of delivering ample digital content in various modes and formats specified by the reader. The researcher states as books become separated from their traditional “containers” there are opportunities for enhancement with audiovisual and graphical elements, which will start to blur the boundaries between media types. He notes that publishers are moving away from legacy publishing models since the onset of mobilization and mobile technology adoption. Since then, publishers have embraced experimentation, with continuing discussions detailing strategy and tactics for these new “containers.” In order to address reader expectations of continuous direct interaction with various kinds of content, driven by the use of mobile web and social media, pressure is put on the book in digital form (Lichtenberg, 2011). However, changing strategy in business is a process, and by targeting the

readers appropriately is one possible way to achieve success in business and profits.

Now that the onset of e-Readers and early magazine websites have been discussed, the research will now examine studies comparing preferences digital reading experiences with traditional hard copy. Digital formats add convenience and immediacy, which has led to discussions involving the factors which contribute to reader preference.

Research has been done on preferences for reading digital books, including details on the situational factors linked to these inclinations. Tomas (2013) states digital publishing has been existent since the 1990s and the popularity of these new platforms has influenced the publishing industry. To better understand digital reader preferences, it is important to identify them demographically and in what situations are they likely to read digital formats. Zhang and Kudva (2014) analyzed data from a study conducted by the Pew Research Center which compared readers' preferences between print books and eBooks. They found that the more books a person reads the more likely they read on digital devices (Zhang & Kudya, 2014). Other strong factors included income level and Internet usage, with higher levels increasing the likelihood of an individual reading digital publications. The data indicate that among daily readers, half of the respondents stated that remaining current was the primary reason. The most common reason cited by people who read a few times a week

was for researching topics of interest (Zhang & Kudya, 2014). Situational factors that lead respondents to read eBooks were related to travelling or commuting as well as the ability to acquire a new book quickly (Zhang & Kudya, 2014). In related study conducted by Burritt (2010), the researcher utilized a cross-sectional survey to conclude that 48% preferred digital reading for pleasure. The study also stated that readers cited environmental benefits to digital consumption as these individuals believed it important to reduced waste: digital magazines were viewed as an ecologically friendly alternative to hard copies which to frequently end up in landfills after consumption. Other referenced benefits include the convenience of subscriptions and automated delivery to their preferred digital reading platform (Burritt, 2010). In response to this trend, eBook publishing has been increasing. In the first half of 2015 eBook publishers saw sales volumes increased by nearly 4.5% globally, and the amount of titles had increased by 16% (Vearsa, 2015).

The reading of digital magazines has seen a similar growth just as the popularity of reading eBooks has grown. An article by *PR Newswire* (2016) cited key findings of the Global Digital Magazine Publishing Market trend report, including a predicted CAGR increase of nearly 20% from 2016 to 2020. Further, throughout 2015, digital consumer magazines accounted for 75% of the global market (*PR Newswire*, 2016) The market share was attributed to a decline in the share of print magazines with the increased preference for digital reading

editions. The study also cited readers' perceived environmental concerns to reduce paper consumption which has in turn increased digital reading (*PR Newswire*, 2016).

Problem

Many aspects of the magazine publishing industry are in decline. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), the magazine industry has realized an average of -1.4% change yearly since 2008. Single copy sales have seen the most dramatic change experiencing a decrease of -14.2% in 2014 alone. It is reasonable to conclude that readers are turning to other outlets or platforms for their information. Magazine publishers need to seek to create engaging experiences for the readers with the goal of increasing the readership and advertising support. One strategy that could assist magazine publishers in stemming the tide would be creating reader-driven content that is motivated by the readers experience.

Currently, publishers are assessing different strategies in order to remain competitive. Now that there are both print and digital editions of magazines, some publishers are offering bundling, which gives subscribers both the print and digital editions, the goal of which is to attract readers that want to have the tactile sensation of a printed magazine, but also the convenience of a digital edition. This is still under discussion as a good strategy as to retain subscribers, and a

few companies that use this technique include Time Inc., Conde Nast, and Meredith (Ives, 2012). Others believe that bundling reduces the amount of possible revenue. The publishing companies Hearst and Bonnier do not consider bundling as beneficial and leads readers to believe that digital content is “free” (Ives, 2012). No found research demonstrates that either side is correct, however if companies track their performances in bundling editions a trend should appear.

The use of the mobile technology for the web has increased considerably and is changing publishers’ business strategy. The Association of Magazine Media stated that throughout 2014 and 2015 U.S. magazine audiences for the mobile web rose 10% to roughly 1.66 billion. They attribute this primarily to readers looking for quick and easy access to content (Rudenstein, 2015; Moss, 2010). According to Tomas (2013) magazine publishers are afforded a new way to monetize content and remain relevant through the increased tendency of readers to utilize mobile devices as their preferred method of accessing content. One contributing factor for why readers are attracted to mobile devices for media consumption are the interactive features offered.

Among the current reader related strategies being employed are the use of targeted marketing as well as data tracking. Highly targeted marketing is an important aspect of Internet-based commerce and advertising. Consumer data that enables targeted marketing is the primary monetizable asset of many social media companies such as Facebook, and the sharing of these data with

advertisers is cited as required for this monetization (Narayanan, 2009). Moss (2010) states: “Integral to this trajectory in consumer preference are online retailers’ aggressive tactics and strategic marketing of digital content to their consumer base, along with groundbreaking innovation in telecommunications” (p. 2). If publishers are targeting readers, then the use of data tracking software will offer data on the success of these campaigns. The utilization of data analytics for the purpose of tracking readers’ habits offers insight to what articles did they actually access, and where did they go before and after reading (Guenther, 2011).

It is clear that special interest magazine publishers are using various strategies in order to maintain and possibly grow their reader base. Through the use of bundling, mobile applications, and data tracking methods publishers have established digital business strategies. While there has been research related to whether readers prefer print over digital publications, and how businesses are adopting digital practices, no found research investigated the specific tools or strategies that special interest magazine publishers are using to increase readership and engagement with the digital platforms. This research focused on what special interest publishers are doing, and to what degree these publishers are user reader input to increase engagement.

Reason for Interest

Undergraduate courses in communications led to an interest in publishing. Courses such as News Editing and Design, Media Writing, and Writing for Public Relations gave way to the idea that her passion for crafting should be merged with her love of communications. Since this revelation, the researcher has contacted her favorite craft publication in order to discern the next steps to get herself in the door. Human Resources pointed her in the direction of a masters in Print Media with thesis work relating to the publishing field.

As a collector and reader of special interest magazines, the researcher has a personal vested interest in the continuation of these special interest magazines. This research will help not only bridge the gap in the literature, but offer details in the industry that will aid in prolonging lifespan of these magazines into the future. There are many uniquely skilled professors at RIT which have offered the researcher different ways to approaching this research.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Basis

This chapter will provide the theoretical framework for this study using the Theory of Disruptive Innovation. This theory was developed to address why great companies pursuing innovation are afflicted with “market myopia” and are surpassed by entrant firm’s products that are based on new, disruptive technologies (Corsi and Di Minin, 2014).

Clayton Christensen (2003) coined the term “Disruptive Innovation” in his book “The Innovator’s Solution,” where he posited that there are two different kinds of technologies that businesses confront: sustainable and disruptive. Sustainable technologies allow businesses to improve operations incrementally in a predicable timeframe, and incorporation of these technologies allows for an organization to remain competitive or maintain the status quo. The other type, disruptive technology, is defined as an innovation that significantly affects the way a business operates. An example of this is the Internet which has caused a significant change in the way organizations do business, while negatively impacting companies that were unwilling to adopt its use (Investopedia, 2016). Danet (2014) stresses that disruptive technologies might underperform when they emerge and may be completely performance-competitive in the same markets in the future.

In a subsequent treatise Christensen and Overdorf (2000) state that there are three factors that affect what an organization can and cannot do. Namely, its resources, its processes, and its values. Resources are the physical, financial, human, and knowledge factors that provide a firm the means to perform its business processes (Business Dictionary, n.d.). Processes are defined by patterns of communication, coordination, interaction and decision-making employees use to transform resources into products and services. Processes are designed for specific tasks and when they are used properly it is likely to perform efficiently. Should that same process be used for a different task than it was designed for the results will, in most cases, be inefficient. Values are a metric by which employees set priorities that permit them to judge the importance of orders, customers, jobs and so on. At the executive level, values drive the decisions whether or not to invest in new products, processes, and services (Christensen & Overdorf, 2000).

The capabilities of an organization may also play a key role in determining the success of adopting a disruptive technology. Christensen and Overdorf (2000) state the central point of an organization's capabilities shift, over time, to its processes and values. The culture of the organization is comprised of these processes and values. During the maturation of a company, employees gradually believe that the priorities and processes they have used successfully and habitually are the right way to do their work. This means that change can be

extraordinarily difficult when the capabilities become entrenched in processes and values, and particularly when they have become embedded in the organization's culture (Christensen & Overdorf, 2000). In a related study targeting the newspaper industry, Weible (2009) concluded that smaller newspapers were hesitant to adopt emerging technologies like the Internet out of fear that it would be the wrong decision at an unaffordable cost to the publisher.

Managers often play a key role in the success of a company. Christensen and Overdorf (2000) suggest that managers can typically recognize disruptive changes and they have access to the resources to confront them, what they can be lacking, however, is their ability to discern the organization's capabilities as carefully as their employees' capabilities. It is important that managers create a space where the capabilities of the organization can be cultivated in terms of new processes and values to adapt to these disruptive changes. Start-up businesses may lack resources; however, their values allow them to embrace smaller market and lower profit margins. Christensen and Overdorf (2000) state: "Start-ups' market research and resource allocation processes allow managers to proceed intuitively; every decision doesn't need careful research and analysis. These adds up to the ability to embrace and even initiate disruptive change" (p. 73).

The Theory of Disruptive Innovation suggests that emerging companies are more capable of dealing with disruptive technology and innovations than larger established companies. Disruptive innovations occur irregularly, which

means that there is a lack of routine processes to handle them, they may not be attractive to the best customers, and these products typically have lower profit margins to start (Christensen & Overdorf, 2000). This is unfavorable to large companies who pursue profitable ventures, and the need to keep that bottom line intact. The authors explain that smaller companies are more capable of the challenge of taking on disruptive innovations because even though they lack resources, their values can accept small markets and low profit margins.

Although emerging companies can handle disruptive innovations because of their value system, larger companies have the option of acquiring new capabilities through acquisitions. Acquisitions can expand a company's capabilities when executives understand where the capabilities reside and assimilate them appropriately (Christensen & Overdorf, 2000). The rule of thumb that is typically utilized involves locating the source of the favorable capabilities in the acquired company. If the acquired company's resources are the source of its success and the main reason for its acquisition, then integrating it into the parent company is possible. However, if the capabilities are stored in an acquired company's processes and values it should not be integrated because the capabilities will then be lost (Christensen & Overdorf, 2000).

The Theory of Disruptive Innovation seeks to explain the factors of success for companies when a disruptive technology emerges in the marketplace. Capabilities, acquisitions, managers, resources, processes, values,

and size of company were all cited as variables in the theory. As such, it provides an apt basis for the present study. In the next chapter, a review of the literature will be provided to tailor the scope of the research.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

An array of literature has been largely focused upon the transition from print media to electronic publishing technologies, including websites and electronic device technologies. This literature review will establish a framework to understand these studies by beginning with those that examine the status of the industry at-large. These studies emphasize the widely-held beliefs that technological innovations coupled with shifting demographics have resulted in a publishing industry mired in a sustained transition where emerging paradigms will largely dictate the future.

After the literature supporting the status of the industry is discussed, the review will turn to research which tracks the growth of digital technology over time and what the possible implications could be for magazine publishers. Many of these studies have taken a broad view of the impact of these disruptive technologies and examined the influence of an electronic presence for traditional print-based magazines in several areas of the business. These studies include the outlook of many publishing companies in terms of both business and digital strategies. Other researchers have restricted their scope and studied the impact of the Internet and other electronic technologies on print-media magazine

circulation; the so-called “cannibalization” effect. An examination of such studies will conclude the literature review.

The Status of the Magazine Publishing Industry

While the state of the magazine industry shows a downward forecast in advertising revenue, interestingly, there appears to be an upward trend in the number of titles available.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, an accounting firm that services 26 different industries, produced a forecast for the decline in magazine advertising spending. Their findings suggest there will be a negative growth of 4% in the amount of money spent on advertising in magazines from 2013 into 2018, including consumer and trade magazines. This is contrasted with a projected growth of 5 % in television advertising, and double-digit growth in internet advertising and videogames (Planimedia, 2015). Since advertising is the fuel on which that the industry runs, this is not a promising finding for magazine publishers.

However, another picture emerges when the number of magazine titles are investigated (Planimedia, 2015). According to an article by Braak (2015), the number of new titles brought to the market in 2014 was eight hundred and fifty-five. A recent search on Amazon indicated that there are over 15,000 titles to choose from in magazine subscriptions. This is certainly not a small number and the stock covers a wide variety of genres to read (Amazon.com, 2016). The

industry is not lacking a variety of topics, so the question remains: *why is the advertising revenue forecasted to decrease?*

Circulation rates may be the answer to this question. The Alliance for Audited Media states that in 2014 the overall Newsstand circulation in the magazine industry saw a -2.2% change from 2013. Since 2008 the data show a decrease every year in the overall circulation (Matsa & Shearer, 2015).

Circulation is slowly decreasing every year in the magazine industry, which in turn causes some advertisers to pull their advertisements from the publications. Abrahamson (1992) states: "Because they dealt with a single product or activity that was fundamental not only to the editorial material but also to the bulk of advertising, specialized magazines could deliver a specific, highly defined audience to their advertisers" (p. 71). Advertising investors have become cautious about their investing habits, favoring traceable and aggressive techniques (Mad 4 Marketing, 2009). Web and mobile marketing are seen as better options to gain a return on investment, and this might be why digital revenue for magazines has seen an increase.

According to Tomas (2013) readers are overwhelmingly turning to mobile devices as their main method of accessing content which gives rise to new ways for magazine publishers to monetize content and stay relevant. One contributing factor for why readers are attracted to mobile devices for media consumption is the interactive features offered. Data have shown that readers are spending

“magazine-like” periods of time with apps on their phones. Tomas (2013) reports that one example is Conde’ Nast, who has found that its iPhone application users are spending upwards of 60 minutes using the app. The significance of this trend in reader habits leads to the importance of developing digital publishing strategies. Magazine publishers will be able to re-establish a relationship with their reader base through interactive marketing in digital formats (Mad 4 Marketing, 2009). Clearly, readership is a key to gaining circulation and there is a definite trend is using mobile devices as a preferred vehicle to consume media.

Having investigated the status of the publishing industry, the research now examines those studies that investigated the impact of digital technologies on publishing technologies. This begins with studies that examine the effect of an electronic presence on the business models of the publishing companies in general, followed by a review of the positioning of the publishing companies themselves in terms of digital and business strategies.

Business Models in Transition

In this next section, a discussion of publications utilization of various platforms will be held. The research reviews book publishing’s process for creating a global presence through digital editions, complementarity between print and website formats, the trend in creating editions specifically made for smart phones, adaptive design for mobile websites, widespread use of social media and its benefits for brand engagement.

Platforms

Book publishing companies that are currently producing digital editions have a similar outlook on the importance of this transformation. Carreiro (2010) stated that Hachette Book Group USA, one of the largest trade publishers in the United States, has been using digital publishing strategies such as digital asset management since the early 2000s. McGraw-Hill Companies Inc.'s Carl Hixon states a primary goal is to undergo a digital transformation, to develop processes for content management and increased global presence (Carreiro, 2010).

Carreiro (2010) also note that another company, Alligood, feels that the future of their business is going to be digital due to the high rates of demand increase year-by-year. Even though the revenue from these sales still represents a small portion of the overall revenue, they expect this number to increase and Alligood is looking to meet this demand through multiple channels. While these publishers produce books, the concept of needing to produce digital editions is important to readers who want the convenience and portability of digital.

In addition to the aforementioned studies, several researchers examined the impact of electronic media on the business models of publishing companies. One such extensive and notable study was published in November of 2014: Guy Consterdine authored "Proof of Performance v2: Making the case for magazine media" for FIPP, The Network for Global Media. Consterdine provides what is effectively a meta-analysis of global research conducted in this domain, where he

examines several aspects of the state of magazine publishing, but specifically germane for the present study is the analysis of digital editions, websites, and social media.

Consterdine (2014) examines websites, where it is contended that there are mixed opinions when the offerings of a magazine's print and digital editions are compared. Consterdine (2014) indicated that 46% of website visitors found the digital and print editions to be of equal attractiveness, and 36% preferred to read a printed magazine over a website. The complementarity between a magazine brand's print and website formats was featured in a survey by L'Efficacite Print + Web in France. In 2011, the survey was conducted using an online sample of over 4,600 magazine readers, and examined three different categories of publication: news, women's and cars. The survey found that 72% of respondents feel that a print magazine and its website complement each other, and they felt attracted to websites rich content and the ability to interact with it (Consterdine, 2014).

In the analysis of digital editions, Consterdine (2014) discusses the status of digital editions and the extent of their adoption. Tablets are the most common way that digital editions are accessed, yet there is a growing trend where publishers are producing digital editions specifically made for smart phones in addition to the tablet editions (Consterdine, 2014). The researcher references Adobe Systems who reports that in the USA in 2013 "...75% of digital edition

reading was on tablets, compared with 23% on smartphones” (p. 52). Magazine branded apps are also reported as being on the rise. Similarly, Consterdine cites data from McPheters & Company who “...recorded that the number of magazine-branded apps released in the USA grew by an average of 28% per quarter between 2011 and 2013, a 6.5 fold increase in two years” (p. 53). Further, the percentage of companies producing digital editions has also become substantial. Consterdine includes data from Gfk MRI, a chief producer of media and consumer research, who concluded “...the number of digital editions measured has grown to 207 in 2014 – out of 219 print titles measured. That is, 95% of measured magazines have digital editions” (p. 53).

The Proof of Performance study also found changes in readership as well as a relationship between readers of print and digital formats. Mediamark Research & Intelligence surmised that the increase in digital readership was due to an increase in digital editions, more multi-platform distribution sources such as Zinio, the adoption of joint subscriptions to print and digital editions, faster download times, and enhancements to the digital products themselves (Consterdine, 2014). This observation, if correct, would point out that publishers created a better environment in which readers could find and enjoy digital magazines. In 2013, Condé Nast, Hearst, Meredith and Time Incorporated commissioned a survey of 27 large circulation magazines. It was found that a percentage of readers exclusive to one format, 44% of digital-only and 18% of

print-only, had read a magazine in the contrasting format. This would suggest that there is a complementary role for these platforms for many readers (Consterdine, 2014). This relationship could be used to increase readership in digital formats.

In order to use the trend data for mobile usage effectively, an application design must be chosen that uses content appropriately and is user friendly. One type of design being implemented is an adaptive design which takes a traditional mobile website to another level. It does this by analyzing the reader's behaviors and habits, as well as usage patterns, and from these data the layout of the site will automatically adjust. Thusly, readers will be engaged longer and this will push for exhaust the possibilities of monetization (Rudenstein, 2015). Xavi Beumala, the CEO and co-founder of Marfeel, an advertising technology platform, urges that in order to remain competitive publishers need to have a mobile first approach in their digital strategy. A well-constructed mobile approach with this strategy can improve engagement, readership, and ad clicks (Rudenstein, 2015).

Finally, Consterdine (2014) researched social media relevant to the publishing industry; this aspect of the research shows that magazine readers are active users of social media. The rise in ownership of smart phones, tablets and other devices has changed the way that people interact not only with each other but also with brands. This suggests that an effective strategy that marketers can

use to achieve social media goals is to partner with magazine publishers to share information on new products, create promotional campaigns, increase brand awareness and product knowledge, interact with readers, receive feedback, and build relationships. Consterdine (2014) provides an example from Brazil where readers of digital platforms use social media to not only gain more knowledge of products featured in the digital edition, but also recommend the featured products to others in their social networks. This constant connection to devices has led to speeding up readers daily lives, influencing their beliefs, boosting their knowledge, and affecting readers' decision-making (Consterdine, 2014).

The use of social media has led to the development of communities where members are passionate and devoted to the subject area. A sense of belonging is cultivated in these online communities, where members relate to each other and are mutually influenced by contributions. Consterdine (2014) suggests that this makes members value the opinions of other members especially knowledge on products and services (Consterdine, 2014). Keng and Ting (2009) note that in 1956, Horton and Wohl developed the paradigm of "parasocial interaction" to describe parasocial relationships between the mass media and audiences. They argued that audiences treat program moderators as good friends; this intimacy builds trust and reliance on the medium. It is relevant to note the role of magazines in this sphere. Consterdine (2014) states that magazine media are considered insiders of these communities which gives marketers a way to

connect readers to a brand. Social media can be used creatively to build relationships with community members and to pitch products in such a way that members will trust the marketing message.

There is a strong relationship between magazine readers and social media. Consterdine (2014) states that in 2013, the USA Experian Marketing Services observed magazine readers' usage of social media by studying several Simmons surveys. It was found that magazine readers are more likely than the general population to follow their favorite brands on networking sites, are more likely to be influenced by opinions of others in the community, and that magazine readers agree that they are more likely to purchase products that are used or recommended by friends on social media (Consterdine, 2014). Different types of social media prove to be useful for specific types of magazine readers. In general, Facebook was found to be in the lead in terms of usage, except for home magazines where Pinterest garnered the most traffic (Consterdine, 2014).

Having established the important trend of digital editions in the publishing domain, the literature review now turns to studies discussing interactivity and the business strategies invoked by the emergence of digitally-based strategies.

Interactivity

The research will now discuss interactivity, as defined by found research, as a tool with multiple potential benefits and its possible role in the success of a

publication. The onset of this tool has led to its widespread use and has developed two distinct categories.

In addition to other benefits, digital content also affords enhanced interactivity versus print editions. Digital interactivity can be thought of as that which includes interpersonal interaction and that which includes machine interaction. Interpersonal interaction refers to the exchange of information or communication between parties, where machine interaction is the amount of user participation in a website such as browsing or clicking on videos. A survey published by Keng and Ting (2009) researched the effects of interactivity on readers of blogs. The researchers reported positive relationships exist between machine interaction and entertainment value, visual appeal, service excellence, and a return on investment. It is reasonable to therefore conclude that the inclusion of interactive elements can be beneficial for publishers. In the same study, interpersonal interaction was found to have a positive relationship with visual appeal, entertainment value, and escapism value (Keng & Ting, 2009). Malthouse, Calder and Temhane (2007) cite that magazine publishers have an investment in creating and delivering these benefits to their readers. Here, the researchers studied advertising effectiveness using a mixed method of interviews together with cross-sectional surveys, and concluded that the manner in which an individual experiences a magazine can affect the way a person reacts to the advertising. The researchers state: "People who find that the stories in the

magazine absorb them also have more positive reactions to the advertising in the magazine” (Malthouse et al., 2007, p. 14). These positive reactions could lead to more interest from advertisers, which in turn creates more advertising revenue. Again, magazines use advertising as a main source of income to continue to publish magazine editions.

Research indicates the effects of interactivity on readers for visual appeal and escapism values which in turn creates more advertising effectiveness. The review will now discuss how interactivity may also increase engagement by readers as well as increase effective information dissemination.

Research has suggested interactivity has multiple potential benefits. Possible benefits of interactivity include engagement and performance quality, a sense of fun and satisfaction, and improving Web usability (Teo, Liu & Wei, 2003). A study on the effects of interactivity on user attitudes found that interactivity on websites appear to have a strong positive effect on satisfaction and also appears to positively influence the effectiveness of information delivery (Teo et al., 2003). A study by Lawrence (2014) examined the types of elements, such as interactivity and assets, used in digital editions to interest readers. The survey asked if interactive elements like URLs, scrolling text, frames, 3-D, social media, and information submission boxes were used. Assets that were included in the survey questions were photos, graphics, video, and audio content. All of

these elements are important to readers because these enhance the reading experience.

Research clearly suggests that reader engagement is an important factor for the success of the publication, as it is shown to directly relate to experiential value. Keng and Ting (2009) state: “Experiential value is the perception customers obtain after rational and emotional consideration based on their perception of products and services and their preferences” (p. 486). As the literature suggests that newspapers were among the first publishing sectors to be affected by the influence of digital publishing, this sector will be discussed initially. Chung and Yoo (2008) studied the motivations of readers for the use of interactivity in online newspapers. The researchers indicated that as newspapers lost readership their strategy turned to utilizing the Internet to increase readership as well as circulation. The researchers state: “Online newspapers attempt to employ various interactive technologies with the hope of engaging readers, encouraging repeat visits, and finally building online communities of readers” (p 381). Chung and Yoo (2008) also indicate that entertainment, information seeking, and socialization are all factors involved in utilizing the interactive elements.

The instance of readers with special interests is essential to the use of interactive features in digital publications. Hunt, Atkin and Kowal (2013) investigated the manner in which community attachment affected the use of

interactive elements, as well as the influence of interactive features on satisfaction, together with how perceived satisfaction dictates continued use in online newspaper publications. The study concluded that community attachment did influence the use of interactive elements, that interactive features did have an influence on satisfaction, and that perceived satisfaction was correlated with continued use in online newspapers. The researchers indicate that publishers should closely consider readers when designing and implementing interactive features (Hunt et al., 2013). It is reasonable to presume that these findings would be equally true for special interest magazines, as readers of these publications presumably already have an attachment to that particular topic. The task, therefore, is to provide readers an engaging experience that encourages continued engagement with the publication.

Business Strategies

The current literature examines publishers' current approaches to offering both a print and digital format for their content. Studies have concluded that online offerings have potential benefits, but the concept of cannibalization is also discussed.

Kuivalainen, Hanna-Kaisa and Sainio (2007) examined the business model of a successful online service in a magazine publisher's offering. The authors conclude that the website is inextricably linked to the three service offerings of a magazine, that is, editorial, circulation and advertising. Notably, the study

suggests a connection between the success of the online magazine to a feedback loop in which readership comments on discussion forums influence editorial and production decisions.

Coexistence of Print and Electronic

Other research that takes a broad view of the impact of digital media on publishing includes Walker (2012), who conducted a comparative analysis of print and web-based content for Women's magazines, where the researcher cited the importance of magazine publishers offering readers a different and richer experience than possible with printed media through electronic methods. According to Walker (2012), enhancing the print experience with a dynamic online strategy enables publishers to build new reader relationships while strengthening existing readership, resulting in overall brand success.

In addition to those studies that took a wide-ranging view of the impact of electronic media, several studies addressed the impact of digital content distribution on circulation and newsstand sales. The subsequent revenue affected by this distribution was also examined. It is widely regarded that many publishers did not readily adopt electronic offerings of their print content, as some believed that such content availability could "cannibalize" their print offering.

Notably, in 2007 Simon and Kadiyali authored "The effect of a magazine's free digital content on its print circulation: Cannibalization or complementarity?"

where the impact of offering digital content of U.S. magazines in the period 1990-2001 was measured to assess the extent of cannibalization. This period was chosen because nearly all U.S. consumer magazines started offering digital content. The authors state: "While we initially assume the decision to offer digital content as exogenous, we find little evidence of endogeneity, and our results are robust to relaxing this assumption" (p. 345). A searchable archive was used to measure each magazine's free content by year and found on average that a magazine's print circulation declines about 3 - 4% when it offers a website (Simon & Kadiyali, 2007). One interesting aspect of this study was that the researchers could determine the extent of overlap between the print and digital content, as well as determine how much this overlap affects cannibalization.

Simon and Kadiyali (2007) state that magazine websites are potentially perfect substitutes for their print counterparts, because the same information can possibly be found in both platforms. There are also many advantages that the Internet provides such as websites can hold unlimited amounts of content, they can be updated continuously, they offer greater search capabilities to find specific information, and most importantly websites can be interactive (Simon & Kadiyali, 2007). These advantages can be used to generate subscription sales. Data have shown that new subscription sales from magazine websites for 2003 were at 9% which is an increase of 6% from 2002 (Simon & Kadiyali, 2007). New

readers could be attracted to the print magazine though the magazine's website if they were used in such a way to complement each other.

There were three main findings of the Simon and Kadivali (2007) study. The greater the overlap between the digital and print led to greater cannibalization, there is no evidence of complementarity between the print and digital formats, and it seems that magazines do not increase circulation by offering digital content (Simon & Kadiyali, 2007).

Day and Shoemaker (2001) indicated that managers are concerned with the possibility of cannibalizing existing profitable products to place content in a niche publication online, so they hold back their support. The fear is so tangible that Chyi and Lasorsa, in a 2001 study, refer to it as the "cannibalization effect" in relation to the Internet because original news content is "cannibalized" and placed online where readers access it for free. Editors and newspaper advertising managers both are concerned about the business ramifications of so-called cannibalization of the news pages that amounts to retooling them for use in niche publications. Offering information previously available only by subscription free to readers who negotiate a Web site and find it for nothing might not make the best business sense (Weible, 2009).

Impact of electronic offerings on circulation and revenue

In related studies of publishing enterprises in Europe, Kaiser and Kongsted (2012) researched the impact of digital media on traditional media sales. The research examined the relationships between website visits and magazine circulation using externally audited monthly data on 67 German magazines from the period May 1998 to November 2009 with a total of 4,903 observations. There was a differentiation between total circulation, kiosk sales, and subscription because there was an assumption that casual readers have different consumption patterns than subscribers.

Kaiser and Kongstead (2012) discovered that the relationship between subscriptions and website visits is positive but mostly statistically insignificant, which indicates that casual readers that tend to buy single copies at newsstands will likely substitute the online format rather than the loyal subscribers who use the digital companion as a complementary companion to the printed edition. The generally positive relationship does provide potentially useful news to publishers in that advertisers' value subscribers significantly more than newsstand readers (Kaiser & Kongsted, 2012). It was found that a 1% increase in website traffic was then associated with a 0.15% decrease in total circulation and 0.20% decrease in kiosk sales. The findings were more drastic when magazines catered toward men or towards readers who use the Internet on a regular basis. The researchers also state that they can neither agree with the pessimistic view of print media and

companion websites, nor disagree that websites do not affect print media.

Overall, the study indicates that the industry is cannibalizing itself (Kaiser & Kongsted, 2012).

It is clear from the above cited studies that in order for magazine publishers to adapt to the digital era, there is a need to form digital marketing strategies in order to secure revenue for funding future editions. This study will focus on magazine publishers who produce digital editions to assess if they use marketing strategies and tools formulated on the basis of their readers' input.

Need for Consumer Tracking

In order to frame this section, a short discussion of what analytics are as well as the capabilities will be discussed. SAS, a leading analytics software company, defines customer analytics as, "...the processes and technologies that give organizations the customer insight necessary to deliver offers that are anticipated, relevant and timely" (n.d). Analytics aid in understanding the reader base in order to increase loyalty, response rates, relevant messages. This way publishers can decrease attrition with increasing prolonged readership (SAS, n.d.). Some digital publishing software includes analytics as part of the service. For example, Ceros offers analysis on page views, time spent, interactions, as well as visitors over time (Ceros, 2017). These tools offer insight into how to deliver content to readers and what is effective in digital publications.

Publishers recognize there is a need for a strong online presence but determining the best practices to use this as a profit center are still unclear. Matejko (2015) found there is a struggle in strategy and profitability between mobile and web, but publishers agree there is a need for increased resources dedicated to these formats. It is important to realize, when considering the large expanse of the web to consume media and ultimately content, that relevance is important. Marketing strategies should focus on personal relevance as well as contextual relevance which can be done using behavioral targeting and knowing the reader base (Matejko, 2015). The Federal Trade Commission defines behavioral advertising as tracking a consumer's activities online, which includes webpages visited, content viewed, and searches conducted, the goal of which is to deliver targeted advertising that is consistent with the interests of the consumer (Turow, 2012).

Collecting data on readers is demonstrated to be beneficial to publishers. Turow, (2012) contends that user profiling to create targeted advertising will receive considerably higher click-through rates than ads served only around content. Advertisers buy the rights to reach readers online using profiles generated from data collected by IP addresses or activity monitoring cookies. By segmenting readers using these profiles, large groups of readers can be targeted and re-targeted on different websites. Turow states: "Many publishers allow more than one network to place ads on their sites in order to generate revenue from

multiple sources. The Huffington Post, for example, allows Advertising.com, ValueClick, Feedburner, and Google as ‘advertising partners’” (p. 75). The collecting of data may be integral into increasing revenues as well as offering contextually relevant ads to readers.

The prevalence of the Internet has led to the utilization of data tracking and analytics to give further insight into the behavior of readers online. This type of business strategy could be implemented to pursue magazine readers’ preferences and include them in digital editions. Gunther (2011) states:

Now we are dealing with quantifiably measurable activities—who downloaded a magazine, when did they do it, on what type of device and where were they when they did it? If they browsed before they bought, where did they come from and how did they reach their purchase decision? (p. 329)

An Article by *Marketing Weekly News* (2014) further underscores Guenther in a discussion of the use of deep data analytics by Hallmark, the goal of which is to provide insight on the readers to reveal new opportunities to monetize, enhance reader experience, and further engage their audience.

The literature review has discussed the status of the magazine publishing industry at large. Research underscores readers utilization of mobile devices and social media for entertainment and community building. However, there has been

much discussion on complementarity between a magazine's print and digital editions, and whether cannibalization occurs. It has been emphasized in the literature that interactivity has multiple benefits, and consumer tracking allows for measuring activities to create targeted advertising. The thesis now turns to the discussion of the research objectives.

Chapter 4

Research Objectives

The primary goal of this quantitative study was to explore the different business strategies which are being used by special interest publishers to understand their digital reader base and increase user engagement. Such strategies include reader surveys and data tracking. There will also be select demographic questions relating to the size of the publishing firm, where potential relationships between the size the organization and behaviors for technology adoption will also be examined, consistent with Christensen and Overdorf (2000). Through a cross-sectional survey technique, factors surrounding these procedures in the publishing industry will potentially benefit several constituencies, not only those in the publishing community but also vendors, educators and future researchers.

With these goals in mind, the following research questions are posited:

Research Question 1: What tools and techniques are special interest periodical publishers utilizing to increase reader engagement?

Research Question 2: What guides the development or inclusion of digital interactive features?

Research Question 3: Does a difference exist between large and small publishers of special interest periodicals in the dedication of resources?

Chapter 5

Method

In this chapter the method of this study is examined. The goals of this study are quantitative in nature, and therefore a survey was used to examine the population. There will be discussion in this chapter on the survey instrument implemented and data collection process, the sample selection process, and the procedures used to analyze the data.

Sample Selection

Sample selection begins with the sampling frame. As the present study was limited to special interest magazines in the United States, the domestic membership of the Association of magazine media (MPA) served as the sampling frame. The MPA is a nonprofit organization that is considered the industry association for multiplatform magazine companies. This organization was founded in 1919, and currently represents 175 domestic magazine media companies with over 900 titles as well as approximately 30 international companies (MPA, n.d). This study focused its research on magazine publishers who are members of The Association of Magazine Media (MPA) to gain a better sense of how these publishers are approaching this problem.

Special interest magazines are “niche” magazines with a specifically targeted audience and focused editorial content for readers of similar lifestyles or interests (Szczepanski, 2006). An Internet search of each organization represented by the MPA indicated which publishers were producing at least one special-interest magazine based on the definition used in the present study. Those publishers, totaling 426, were designated to receive an invitation to complete the survey. The publishers selected to survey were those considered to be special interest publishers and those that also produce digital editions of their magazines. The list of domestic members was analyzed and cleared out of organizations that did not have special interest publications.

Survey Instrument

Using the research questions as a guide, a questionnaire was developed with the goal of best addressing those questions. The publisher questionnaire includes questions about strategies used in pursuing reader engagement. Questions were aimed at inquiring the use of digital tools and the dedication of resources. The main purpose of this study was to focus on what publishers are doing to increase engagement in their digital editions.

Pilot Testing

A pilot test has been conducted prior to inviting companies to take the survey. The literature strongly supports the need for pilot testing survey

instruments (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014). Testing surveys beforehand allows for the correction of problems ahead of time, so that the final data collected will not be compromised by an issue within the survey (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). The survey was reviewed by the thesis committee in order to address the wording and structure of the questionnaire. The survey instrument was pilot tested among faculty in the School of Media Sciences at RIT with the goal of proofreading and providing face validity. As the survey was going to be administered using an online Internet-based method, the pilot test was conducted using a computer-based method. Pilot testers were encouraged to review the questionnaire multiple times giving different answers to the questions so that they can experience each facet of the survey.

Data Collection Process

Using procedures suggested by Dillman, Smyth and Christian, (2014) the steps in data collection were as follows. An introduction letter was sent to companies prior to the direction to the online survey. This was a way to establish trust and to inform the population about the survey. A week later the informed consent and directions to the questionnaire was mailed to the prospective respondents. The contact information from the population contained some contacts with only a physical address and many with email contact information. Those with a physical address received the introduction letter and informed consent through the mail, while those with an email address received all

correspondence through email. All potential respondents were given the link to the online survey.

Reminder Postcards

Austin, Richter and Reinking (2008) states that follow-up reminders are suggested to achieve the maximum response rate. Reminder postcards were mailed one week after the invitation to participate in the survey, and again the following week.

Data Analysis

Although every effort was taken to increase response rates, it is understood that to infer to a population of 426, a 95% confidence level would need a response rate of well over 400 responses (Neuman, 2009). In today's survey climate, it is recognized that such a response rate is unlikely. Therefore, research questions will be addressed by data analysis that examines the responses obtained. While the cynic may contend that such analysis is merely interesting facts about those that responded, it is nonetheless the most relevant and appropriate way to obtain the information required to comment upon the research questions in this domain, while remaining within the bounds of accepted research techniques and human subject protection.

Limitations

Like any research endeavor, limitations are an inherent component of the presently proposed venture. This research had a limited sampling frame by design which was to examine domestic members of the Association of Magazine Media who publish digital special interest periodicals.

In addition, as a proposed cross-sectional survey, one goal was to collect data that can be generalized across a broader population. However, it is important to recognize that this procedure does not afford the ability to delve deeply into specific conditions for any individual publisher as would be the case with a qualitative case study or similar ethnographic undertaking.

Furthermore, this study was not longitudinal in nature, therefore was representative of a short period of time; research concerns requiring a longitudinal view are not purported to be addressed.

Chapter 6

Results

The methodology of this research yielded the results that will be discussed in this chapter. There will be a brief overview of the survey implementation, followed by a discussion of the data obtained from the questionnaire.

Overview

This survey was intended for editors of special interest periodicals who produce digital magazines. Analyzed respondents therefore were comprised of those organizations producing at least one special interest magazine in at least one electronic format. In instances where organizations produce more than one special interest periodical digitally, respondents were asked to consider the one title in which they are most familiar when answering the questions. The sampling frame began with 426 viable special interest magazines that were produced digitally. In the course of several months, that pool of potential respondents decreased to 343 publishers that were still producing digital magazines. Contact information yielded 292 respondents and those respondents were given the introduction letter as well as the link to the survey; the letter is reproduced in Appendix A. It is important to note that over the course of four weeks, 29 letters were returned to sender with no forwarding information. Four respondents, at the moment of participating in the survey, indicated that they were no longer

producing digital editions while taking part in the survey. Forty-seven responses were recorded; after removing the four respondents that were no longer producing digital editions, a response rate of 16.6 % remained.

In an effort to determine the platforms utilized for digital editions, respondents were asked: “Of the below digital platforms, which does the publication currently use?” As it is common to produce digital editions in multiple formats based on reader preference, it is likely that some editions are produced on more than one format, therefore respondents could choose all that apply. In this instance, nearly 62% chose “Web Browser Edition” as a platform, over 55% chose “Digital PDF,” while over 42% indicated that their digital editions are made available in a “Mobile Application Format.” The results are illustrated in Table 1. Just over 40% of respondents are utilizing a mobile application which leaves approximately 60% not currently utilizing a mobile approach. Research indicates a large growth in the creation of mobile applications as well as readers preferring the “laid back” feel of reading content on their mobile devices. This is possibly a missed opportunity many respondent’s organizations have not taken. The research will now discuss the reasoning behind the utilization of digital platforms.

Table 1

Electronic Platforms Utilized

Web Browser Edition	61.7%
Digital PDF	55.3%
Mobile Application	42.5%
<i>n</i> = 43	

Respondents were also asked about the primary motivation behind the creation of their digital edition. Here, four choices were presented, as well as an opportunity for respondents to fill-in their own answer. The choices were “Increased Relationship with Brand,” “Increased Purchasing from Brand,” “Longer Engagement with Editions,” and “Remaining Competitive in the Magazine Industry.” In this instance, over 68% indicated that “Remaining Competitive in the Magazine Industry” was the top motivator. Twenty-one percent selected “Increased Relationship with Brand,” and only 5% selected “Increased Purchasing from Brand.” None of the respondents selected “Longer Engagement with Editions.” One respondent chose “Other,” and wrote: “In today’s climate, a digital edition is mandatory.” Note that none of respondents chose longer engagement with editions. It is also interesting to note that just under one-half of the potential respondents elected to answer this particular question ($n = 19$). Perhaps non-respondents felt unqualified to answer this question, either because they were not involved in the decision to produce a digital edition, or could not speak to motivating factors that drive decisions such as this within their organization. The data for this question can be found illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Primary Motivation for the Creation of the Digital Edition

Remaining Competitive in the Magazine Industry	68.4%
Increased Relationship with Brand	21.0%
Increased Purchasing	5.3%
Other	5.3%
Longer Engagement with Editions	0.0%

n = 19

The survey instrument then questioned respondents on the benefits realized from utilizing a digital edition. The choices available were the same ones used in the prior question, though this query allowed respondents to select all the choices that applied. It is possible there are multiple benefits to utilizing digital editions. The most prevalent response to the question, with 74.3% of total respondents, was to remain competitive in the industry. One respondent chose the fill in option for this particular question indicating there was no benefit. Another respondent claimed that a digital edition "...extends our reach internationally to readers who do not receive the print publication; and allows us, a bimonthly, to create daily/news posts for electronic dissemination." One other respondent chose to offer a response that states digital editions are "...fulfilling our mission to provide our resources free of charge worldwide to those who cannot or would not use the printed form. As a non-profit, this is a part of our overall mission." Additionally, a finding to note is the boost in the selections of increased relationship with brand and longer engagement with editions as

benefits realized from the utilization of digital editions. The summary of the response data for this question can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Benefits Realized from the Digital Edition

Remaining Competitive in the Magazine Industry	74.3%
Increased Relationship with Brand	51.4%
Increased Purchasing	2.9%
Other	8.6%
Longer Engagement with Editions	20%

n = 35

Respondents were asked about the tools that the publication utilize to better understand their reader base, and the responses appeared to break into primarily used and rarely used categories. The choices were “Surveys,” “Customer Relationship Software,” “Customer Reviews,” “Engage on Social Media,” “Analytics,” and “Trend Reports from Market research.” This query was a select all the apply question and the data for the responses can be found in Table 4 below. Customer reviews was chosen by 11 respondents which leads the researcher to tend to believe that reader input is more often considered from social media sources and surveys for this population. The response "Analytics" was also highly chosen by 29 respondents. A majority of respondents, 97.2% percent, believe the intention of the publication is increased reader engagement through the utilization of tools by the publication.

Table 4

Tools Utilized to Understand Reader Base

Surveys	80.0%
Customer Relationship Management Software	11.4%
Customer Reviews	31.4%
Engage on Social Media	85.7%
Analytics	82.9%
Trend Reports from Market Research	25.7%

n = 35

The survey turned to the use of social media. Social media, as explained in the literature review, not only creates a sense of community but serves as a means to create relationships between a brand and its followers. Thirty-four respondents state the respective publication utilizes social media. This can be considered as unexpectedly low considering the popularity of social media usage and the benefits of utilizing this online media. As of January 2018, the worldwide population is cited to be 7.593 billion people while number of social media users is 3.196 billion. This would indicate that nearly half the world's population uses social media, thus it is natural to presume that social media is a substantial tool to reach readers and create communities (Kemp, 2018).

The main goal of social media was largely chosen as interaction with the brand, as Table 5 illustrates. All other answers received less than fifteen percent support by respondents. Those answers included: "Gaining Insight into Readers Needs and Expectations," "Readers to Influence Each Other," and "Increased Marketing Opportunities." Respondents selected "Readers to Influence Each

Other” the least amount of times which could mean a lack of awareness to the benefits of community building that social media offers.

Table 5

Primary Goal of Social Media

Interaction with Brand	72.7%
For Readers to Influence Each other	6.1%
Increased Marketing Opportunities	9.1%
Gain Insight to Readers Needs and Expectations	12.1%

n = 33

The survey instrument posed a question regarding the inclusion of interactive features, and, of those that answered the question, 68.6% answered in the positive.

The survey used skip logic to progress respondents who do not use interactive features to the next section and allow those who answered positively to answer further questions about the publication’s use of interactive features.

The following question in the survey required respondents to rank their answers as to the benefits of interactivity. The choices for this question were “Increased Readership,” “Remain Competitive in the Market,” “Revenue Potential Merits Inclusion/ Development of Interactive Features,” and “Increased Engagement from Readers.” Table 6 illustrates that 61.9% of respondents who answered this question agreed that increased engagement with readers was the highest ranked benefit of interactivity. The second highest ranked answer was increased readership with 38.1% selecting that as the secondary benefit of

interactivity. It is interesting to note that remaining competitive in the market was ranked as the lowest benefit of all the answers by 61.9% of respondents.

Table 6

Ranked Benefits of Interactivity

	Ranked #1	Ranked #2	Ranked #3	Ranked #4
Increased Readership	4	8	8	1
Remain Competitive in the Market	1	4	3	13
Revenue Potential Merits Inclusion / Development of Interactive Features	3	2	10	6
Increased Engagement from Readers	13	7	0	1
<i>n</i> = 21				

Respondents were then asked for the primary motive for the development of interactive features. The answers available included “Current Capabilities of the Publication,” “Requests from Customers,” and “A Comparison of Competitors’ Products.” Table 7 denotes that the current capabilities of the publication was highly selected by 79.2% of respondents. The next query examined the inclusion of interactive features and the same possible answers for the prior question were made available. The current capabilities of the publication were also highly chosen for the inclusion of interactive features by 69.6% of respondents. Data for the inclusion of interactive features can be found in Table 8. It is interesting to note that only 53.5% of respondents chose to answer this question.

Table 7

Primary Motive for the Development of Interactive Features

Current Capabilities of the Publication	79.2%
Requests from Customers	12.5%
A Comparison of Competitors' Products	8.3%

n = 24

Table 8

Primary Motive for the Inclusion of Interactive Features

Current Capabilities of the Publication	69.6%
Requests from Customers	17.4%
A Comparison of Competitors' Products	13.0%

n = 23

The following question in the survey inquired who the main drivers were behind the development of interactive features. The choices available for this question were “Advertisers,” “Managerial Staff /Leadership team,” and “Readers.” Respondents were told to drag and reorder their answers from most to least important. Table 9 describes the breakdown in votes in terms of most important to least important. The leadership team was selected as the main driver by 54.6%; while 31.8% of respondents chose their readers as the main drivers behind developing these interactive features. Advertisers are considered the second highest rank with 45.5%.

Table 9

Main Drivers Behind the Development of Interactive Features

	Ranked #1	Ranked#2	Ranked#3
Advertisers	3	10	9
Managerial staff/Leadership team	12	4	6
Readers	7	8	7

n = 22

Respondents were then asked who the main drivers behind the inclusion of interactive features are. Responses to this question show a similar trend in respondents' answers to the prior question, as Table 10 illustrates. It is important to note that readers have consistently been chosen as all three ranks by respondents for both the development and inclusion of these elements, which suggests that each publisher has a somewhat different view on the importance of their readers. An average 34% chose their readers as ranking first, second, and third for each of these questions.

Table 10

Main Drivers Behind the Inclusion of Interactive Features

	Ranked #1	Ranked#2	Ranked#3
Advertisers	4	10	9
Managerial staff/Leadership team	12	6	5
Readers	7	7	9

n = 23

This study was concerned with what guides the utilization of interactive features and also investigated the support of the advancement of these features. The survey turned to the factors that have most supported respondents' advancement in the inclusion of interactive elements and the choices were listed as "Company Size," "Leadership Team," "Sustained Readership," "Resources Available," and "Revenue Gained from Elements" in the survey instrument. Table 11 indicates that the highest percentage of respondents, 43.5%, identified the leadership team as the number one support in advancing the utilization of these features. As well as 34.8% choosing resources as the highest-ranking factor in supporting the advancement of interactivity. The second highest ranking answer was overwhelmingly chosen as sustained readership by 34.8%. The other answers for the second selection had a mean of 17.4%. The answer chosen as the lowest rank by 43.5% of respondents was company size. An interesting note is that revenue gained was largely selected as lower ranking by a majority of respondents.

Table 11

Factors for Advancement in Inclusion of Interactive Features Ranked

	Ranked #1	Ranked #2	Ranked #3	Ranked #4	Ranked #5
Company Size	0	3	7	3	10
Leadership Team	10	5	6	2	0
Sustained Readership	2	8	5	5	3
Resources	8	4	2	6	3
Revenue Gained from Elements	3	3	3	7	7

n = 23

Several types of size information were investigated since special interest magazine publishers vary in organization size. The choices available were “3 or less,” “4-8,” “9-13,” and “14 or more.” Data from the survey shown in Table 12 indicates that seventy-five percent of respondents stated that 3 or less individuals are primarily focused on the creation of a singular digital edition. The next data segment revealed that 12.5% of respondents have four to eight personnel dedicated to the creation of the digital edition. The other two possible responses had a selection rate of 6.25% for both the 9-13 and 14 or more segments.

Table 12

Size of Staff Focused on the Digital Edition

3 or Less	75.00%
4-8	12.50%
9-13	6.25%
14 or more	6.25%

n = 32

The survey instrument then examined the number of titles each publisher produced. The options given for this question were “5 or Less,” “6-15,” “16-21,” and “22 or More.” Respondents who produce 5 or less titles make up 41.9% of the data set. Though the instrument offered several other segments to choose from; however, in the interest of gathering meaningful data, two segments were formed to categorize respondents into small and large publishers. Small publishers are categorized as producing 5 or fewer periodicals and large publishers produce 6 or more. Large publishers therefore comprise 58.1% of the data set. The survey question with a breakdown of the segments can be found in Appendix C. A cross examination of titles produced versus staff dedicated to the digital edition can be found in Table 13.

Table 13

<i>Number of Titles Produced versus Staff Dedicated to the Creation of Editions</i>		Number of staff dedicated to the creation of a single digital edition				
Number of titles		3 or less	4-8	9-13	14 or more	Total
produced by the Publication	5 or less	7	2	2	2	13
	6-15	11	1	0	0	12
	16-21	2	0	0	0	2
	22 or more	3	1	0	0	4
	Total	23	4	2	2	31

The following question from the survey instrument questioned the total number of labor hours dedicated to the digital edition. Labor hours were considered the total sum of all the hours spent by all of the individuals working on the production of a single digital edition. This included personnel that work only

part time on each edition. Since each response was going to vary greatly from publisher to publisher, the data set was broken into two parts, one for those that fall into the small publisher category and those that fall into the large category. There were two responses removed from the data due to being extreme outliers, which would skew the data and give an incorrect overall impression regarding the information collected.¹

The data demonstrated in Figure 1 reveals the number of hours small publishers utilize to create a single standard digital edition. This question from the survey was a fill in the blank which allowed respondents to reply with answers that were not just numerical in nature. Several small publishers indicated there was no way to know how long it took to create a digital edition. One respondent stated, “Impossible to calculate due to the amount of crossover work from the print edition.” Information on large publishers’ labor hours can be found in Figure 2.

The average time spent by small publishers was 90.9 hours per digital edition, and large publishers indicated an average time of 40.8 hours. Another

¹ One respondent indicated that 1,600 hours were spent producing five or fewer editions, this response represents an extreme outlier and is 1509.1 more than the average of all responses for publishers of this size, and therefore it is more likely that the response was the result of an error than representative of the actual labor hours spent to produce five or fewer titles. It is possible the question was misunderstood, or perhaps the respondent intended to indicate 160 labor hours. In the spirit of open and honest inquiry, the raw data are provided in Appendix F.

examination of this data set revealed the range differences between the two groups to have a noteworthy difference. The range in hours spent on the creation of a singular digital edition by small publishers was 345 and the range for large publishers was 238 hours.

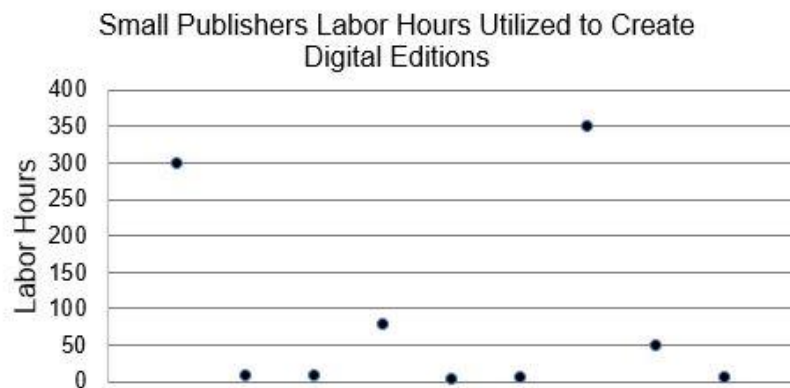


Figure 1 Scatter plot indicating small publishers average number of hours dedicated to a standard digital edition of a magazine.



Figure 2 Scatter plot indicating large publishers average number of hours dedicated to a standard digital edition of a magazine

This chapter was dedicated to discussing the general survey response results and to summarize the general results. The next chapter will explore these results further as they relate to the research questions. The suggestions for future research and the limitations of this research are also discussed.

Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter provides an analysis of the findings and inferences that can be obtained from the data. The suggestions for future research, as well as the implications of this study, are also be presented.

Analysis and Conclusions

This research was quantitative in nature and is centered around what the current methods and tools special interest publishers are utilizing now that digital publishing practices are established and the widespread use of the Internet has been adopted by readers. An extensive review of published research indicated a dearth of empirical studies which examine the business aspects of the magazine publishing industry. The purpose of the study was to address the problem in that the magazine publishing industry is in entropy. Research stipulates that advertising revenue is decreasing, there are slight decreases yearly in the industry since the advent of the tablet-based computer as well as a very large decrease in single copy sales as outlined in Chapter 1. It is also relevant to note that this study demonstrates the industry is in a state of decline as many magazines ceased publication during the aggregation of contact information. This potentially speaks to the status of the industry as more and more companies move out of the special interest magazine publication industry. Clearly the paradigm is rapidly shifting, and the number of relevant players is eroding at a

rapid rate. This next section will examine the results from the questionnaire as they apply to the research objectives.

Research Question 1: What tools and techniques are special interest periodical publishers utilizing to increase reader engagement?

When asked about the primary reason for having a digital option for the special interest magazine, none of the respondents answered longer engagement with editions. Digital editions were cited as remaining competitive in the industry as well as one respondent going so far as to say that a digital edition is mandatory in today's society. However, it was cited by seven respondents as a realized benefit from the utilization of digital platforms.

The tools selected most for both large and small publishers were surveys, analytics, and engagement on social media. Customer reviews, customer relationship management software and trend reports were selected much lower by respondents. This might suggest that these publishers are utilizing analytics to measure the success of their content rather than read reviews of their products, putting reliance in metrics over readers' comments on reviews of specific products. Reader input appears to be largely gathered from the utilization of surveys and social media channels. Respondents indicated reader engagement was the primary motive behind the utilization of social media. The utilization of interactive features was also cited as a technique for increased engagement.

Research Question 2: What guides the development or inclusion of digital interactive features?

Research has demonstrated multiple benefits of interactivity, most notably, the increase in experiential value its effect on readers, making them more susceptible to advertising content (Malthouse et al., 2007). This effect could lead to more engagement with advertising and therefore more advertising support for the creation of more editions.

Respondents feel the primary benefit of interactive features is increased engagement and the secondary benefit is an increase in readership. Revenue potential as well as remaining competitive received very low scores in the ranking query as potential benefits of interactivity. This suggests that readers are prioritized over advertising revenue and implies an inward focus on content rather than employing an external analysis on the market. It is possible that special interest publishers are focusing on attracting readers first and having the effect being more advertising revenue.

When considering the inclusion and development of these features, the respondents chose the current capabilities of the publication as the dominate answer for both inclusion and development. Capabilities, according to Christensen and Overdorf (2000), play a key role in determining the success of adopting a disruptive technology. The researchers also state managers lack the ability to discern the organization's capabilities as carefully as their employees'

capabilities. Further investigation into the success of implementing interactivity verses the publishers' capabilities could be examined in future research.

The main driver behind the development and inclusion of interactivity cited by respondents was the leadership team. Since the questionnaire was sent to managerial personnel, this could be a biased response. The finding to note for this query is that readers cannot be definitively determined as a priority or as the lowest ranking concern surrounding the development and inclusion of interactivity. Around 34% of responses ranked them at each status rank.

The advancement of including interactive features was also examined and found that the leadership team as the highest factor considered, while company size was the lowest. While response bias could be present, the leadership team for any company would play a role in its success; thus, answer was included in the questionnaire in spite of any possible bias. Christensen and Overdorf (2000) state that smaller companies are better able to handle disruptive technologies; so it is interesting to note that company size was the lowest ranking choice.

Sustained readership held the second rank, which could imply that readers, while not considered the main driver behind development and inclusion of interactivity, hold a large importance in supporting the publications' use of such features.

Research Question 3: Does a difference exist between large and small publishers of special interest periodicals in the dedication of resources?

The questionnaire asked respondents about the number of staff primarily focused on the creation of each edition. Three or less personnel were chosen by a vast majority of respondents. This speaks to the nature of publishing digital periodicals since it is possible many of the assets used in the printed version are then utilized in the digital edition. The research will now discuss the amount of labor hours dedicated to digital editions.

The previous chapter outlined the large discrepancy between the dedication of resources between large and small special interest publishers. The mean hours spent by small publishers was 90.9 hours per edition versus large publishers' average time of 40.8 hours. Small publishers require over double the amount of time for the creation of each standard digital edition. This could indicate that large publishers have more access to automated tools to streamline and speed up the process of creating digital editions. It could also indicate that smaller publishers have yet to formulate expeditious procedures to create the digital edition.

A cross examination of small publishers compared to large publishers in their dedication of staff versus title count revealed a large discrepancy between the two sets. For the most part, larger publishers dedicate 3 or less staff members to digital editions, meanwhile, small publishers dedicate anywhere from under three staff members to over fourteen staff members for a company

producing 5 or less titles. This could suggest large organizations already have a system while small publishers are more inconsistent with their dedication of resources and, thus more in danger in this declining industry.

Implications and Future Research

The research discussed the findings of the data in regards to the research questions. Now the research will move to the implications of this study and what it could mean for the special interest magazine publishing industry. Suggestions for future research will also be discussed in this section

This research suggests that smaller publishers may need to consider restructuring the process of creating digital editions. There is a possibility for the automated IT tools industry to aid digital magazine publishers in streamlining the process of creating a digital edition. The industry has seen the rise of products like Ceros and those offered by companies like Magloft to create digital editions by importing the print layout. These produces provide the ability for users to implement interactivity options, and even include requisite analytical tools. Should such tools be sufficiently accessible and affordable for smaller publishing houses, the adoption of these could provide a needed stimulus. This could increase smaller publishers' levels of success in this tumultuous industry.

In conducting the literature review for the present study, it is apparent that the relationship between publishers and social media is especially interesting.

Clearly, social media channels are designed for users to engage with communities of like-minded individuals. Such community-building is strongly desired by special interest magazine publishers, as increased readership and a subsequent increase in advertising dollars can ensue. The concern is that social media platforms, such as Instagram or Pinterest, are potential substitutes for some special interest magazine titles. Meanwhile, publishers need to decide how to best utilize the tools of social media: this represents a possible conundrum for the publishing community.

The suggestions for future research will now be discussed. The implications of this study were discussed as the possible rise of automated tools as well as the possible effect of social media use by readers of special interest periodicals.

Future researchers may choose to conduct this study with general interest magazines with the goal of ascertaining if the primary driver behind social media efforts is advertisers or reader engagement. It is relevant to note that over one-half of the respondents were not producing mobile application versions of their digital editions. As research indicates that many readers utilize mobile versions of publications on tablets and smart phones, this indicates an opportunity for these publishers to consider meeting the needs of a potentially larger pool of readers. Further, future researchers could investigate the “why” of this particular finding: such an inquiry could be of benefit not only to the publishing community, but to

vendors, as well. Another suggestion would be for future researchers to explore the impact of social media on the magazine industry in general. Future research could also explore special interest magazines' business strategies in a more in-depth method, such as conducting interviews. The problem outlined in this study was that the industry is not only changing, but it is in decline as well. Revenues are forecasted to decrease, and newsstand sales have seen significant decreases. Reader engagement, by creating editions that have high escapism value as well as an interactive experience in order to draw in more advertising revenue, is vital to the success of this industry.

Bibliography

- Abrahamson, D. (1992) The rise of the special interest magazine in “the other 1960s”: an economic and sociocultural history. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 9237917)
- Austin, T. M. PhD, Richter, R. R. PhD, & Reinking, M. F. PhD (2008) A primer on web surveys. *Journal of Allied Health*. 37(3), 180-186
- Amazon (2016) Retrieved from
http://www.amazon.com/magazines/b/ref=topnav_storetab_mag?ie=UTF8&node=599858
- Burritt, K. A. (2010) *E-books: revolutionizing book culture*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 1475297)
- Braak, R. (2015) Record number of new magazine titles in the USA. Retrieved from <http://blokboek.net/en/record-number-of-new-magazine-titles-in-the-usa/>
- Business Dictionary. (N.D.) Business resources. Retrieved from
<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/business-resources.html>
- Carreiro, E. (2010) Electronic Books: How Digital Devices and Supplementary New Technologies are changing the face of the publishing industry. *Publishing Research Quarterly*. 26(4), 219-235.
- Ceros (2017) *Tag: analytics*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.ceros.com/academy/tag/analytics/>
- Christensen, C.M., & Overdorf, M. (2000 March/April) Meeting the challenge of disruptive change. *Harvard Business Review*. 78(2), 66-76. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2000/03/meeting-the-challenge-of-disruptive-change>
- Chung, D. S., & Yoo, C. Y. (2008) Audience motivations for using interactive features: distinguishing use of different types of interactivity on an online newspaper. *Mass Communication & Society* 11(4) 375-397.

- Consterdine, G. (2014), "Proof of Performance V2, Making the Case for Magazine Media". FIPP: The Network for Global Media available at: <http://fipp.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/ef2c2981-3654-4878-8888-58c6ddd86e79.pdf> (accessed 20 November 2016).
- Corsi, S., & Di Minin, A. (Mar 2014) Disruptive Innovation in Reverse: Adding a Geographical Dimension to Disruptive Innovation Theory. *Creativity and Innovation Management*. 23(1), 76-90.
- Danet, P. (2014): The future of book publishing: seven technology trends and three industry goals. *Publishing Research Quarterly*. 30(3) 275-281.
- Digital magazine publishing market to grow at 20% CAGR to 2020. (2016, Jan 22). *PR Newswire*. Retrieved from: <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.rit.edu/docview/1758982099?accountid=108>
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014) Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: the tailored design method. Retrieved from [http://reader.ebilib.com.ezproxy.rit.edu/\(S\(s2ebhmoipkixty55fc1xnmk2\)\)/Reader.aspx?p=1762797&o=1851&u=FaF1KGglBoA%3d&t=1479179962&h=E965850F7DA6CC0B521EF60A292F4C5BD35B2C66&s=49966690&ut=6171&pg=21&r=img&c=1808&pat=n&cms=2&sd=2#](http://reader.ebilib.com.ezproxy.rit.edu/(S(s2ebhmoipkixty55fc1xnmk2))/Reader.aspx?p=1762797&o=1851&u=FaF1KGglBoA%3d&t=1479179962&h=E965850F7DA6CC0B521EF60A292F4C5BD35B2C66&s=49966690&ut=6171&pg=21&r=img&c=1808&pat=n&cms=2&sd=2#)
- Guenther, M. (2011) Magazine publishing in transition: unique challenges for multi-media platforms. *Publishing Research Quarterly*. 27(4) 327-331.
- Hunt, D. S., Atkin D. J., & Kowal, C. J. (Spring 2013) Community attachment affects use of online, interactive features. *Newspaper Research Journal* 34(2)
- Investopedia. (2016) *Disruptive technology*. Retrieved from <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/disruptive-technology.asp>
- Ives, N. (2012) To bundle, or not to bundle: mags grapple with iPad subs: as Sports Illustrated rolls back last year's 'all access' price hike, publishers take stock of tablet sales strategy. *Advertising Age*. 83(10)
- Kaiser, U., & Kongsted, H. C. (2012). Magazine "Companion Websites" and the Demand for Newsstand Sales and Subscriptions. *Journal Of Media Economics*, 25(4), 184-197. doi:10.1080/08997764.2012.729545

- Kemp, S. (2018) Digital in 2018: world's internet users pass the 4 billion mark. Retrieved from <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>
- Keng, C., & Ting, H. (2009) The acceptance of blogs: using a customer experiential value perspective. *Internet Research*. 19(5) 479-495.
- Lawrence, S. (2014). *Investigating digital publishing trends within the consumer magazine industry*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 1565137)
- Lichtenberg, J. (2011) In from the Edge: The Progressive Evolution of Publishing in the Age of Digital Abundance. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 27(2), 101-112.
- Mad 4 Marketing. (2009) *Magazine print ad sales decline*. Retrieved from: <http://mad4marketing.com/magazine-print-ad-sales-decline/>
- Malthouse, E. C.; Calder, B. J., & Tamhane, A. (2007) The effects of media context experiences on advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising* 36(3) 7-18.
- Matejko, R. (2015) City & Regional Publishers Optimistic After Years of Turbulence: Featuring 6 Trends Affecting the Local Publishing Segment. *Publishing Executive* 30(4) 26-28.
- Matsa, K., & Shearer, E. (2015) *State of the news media: news magazines: fact sheet*. Retrieved from: <http://www.journalism.org/2015/04/29/news-magazines-fact-sheet/>
- Moss, M. H. (2010) *Strategic implications of the digitization of publishing popular fiction in the 21st century: Introducing the OCTOPUS theory*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 1476177)
- Narayanan, A. (2009) *Data privacy: the non-interactive setting*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3368859)
- Neuman, W. L. (2009) *Understanding research*. Location: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Planimedia (2015) *PriceWaterHouseCoopers Global entertainment and media outlook 2014-2018*. Retrieved from: <http://www.slideshare.net/Planimedia/global-entertainment-and-media-outlook-20142018>

- Rieder, R. (2016, May 25) Newspapers haven't 'cracked code,' Buffett says. USA TODAY. Retrieved from:
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/columnist/rieder/2016/05/25/rieder-newspapers-havent-cracked-code-buffett-says/84902818/>
- Rudenstein, D. (2015) Mobile traffic growth drives magazine publishers to shift mobile strategy during 2015. *Business Wire*. (n.a.)
- Salesforce (2018) Bring your CRM to the future. Retrieved from
<https://www.salesforce.com/crm/>
- SAS (n.d) Customer analytics: what it is and why it matters. Retrieved from:
https://www.sas.com/en_us/insights/marketing/customer-analytics.html
- Simon, D. H., & Kadiyali, V. (2007). The effect of a magazine's free digital content on its print circulation: Cannibalization or complementarity? *Information Economics and Policy*, 19(3), 344. Retrieved from
<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.rit.edu/docview/199295372?accountid=108>
- Staff News Editor (2014): Hallmark Data Systems; Hallmark data systems and ePublishing, inc. deeply integrate cloud & data services to drive new revenue models and user individualization. *Marketing Weekly News*; 94.
- Szczepanski, C. M. (2006) *General and special interest magazine advertising and the elaboration likelihood model: A comparative content analysis and investigation of the effects of differential route processing execution strategies*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. (UMI No 3203946)
- Teo, H.; Oh, L.; Liu, C., & Wei, K. (2003) An empirical study of the effects of interactivity on web user attitude. Retrieved from:
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Chunhui_Liu4/publication/222050736_An_empirical_study_of_the_effects_of_interactivity_on_web_user_attitude/links/00b7d52f1320588b12000000.pdf
- The Association of Magazine Media (N.D) *Who we are*. Retrieved from
<http://www.magazine.org/about-mpa/who-we-are>
- Tomas, K. (2013) Virtual Reality: Why Magazines Should Adopt a Mobile-First Publishing Strategy. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 301-317.

Turow, J. (2012) *The daily you: how the new advertising industry is defining your identity and your worth*. New Haven, US: Yale University Press,. ProQuest ebrary. Web.

Vearsa. (2015) *Mid-year review: new trends in the global ebook market*. Retrieved from: <https://www.vearsa.com/mid-year-review-new-trends-in-the-global-ebook-market/>

Weible, H. G. (2009) *Niche publications: Their popularity and profitability at newspapers in Utah and West Virginia*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, (UMI No. 1481332)

Glossary

Consumer tracking- the processes and technologies that give organizations the customer insight necessary to deliver offers that are anticipated, relevant and timely. (SAS, 2017)

Customer Relationship Management- (CRM) is a strategy for managing all your company's relationships and interactions with your customers and potential customers. It helps you improve your profitability (Salesforce.com, 2018).

Digital magazine-For the purpose of this study a digital magazine will include magazine applications, website magazines, and PDF downloads.

Interactivity- There are two types of interactivity which are interpersonal interaction and machine interaction Interpersonal interaction refers to communication between the reader and other readers or the publisher. Machine interaction is amount of participation a reader can engage with a website.

Reader experience- Previous research has defined this as the perception gained by readers after rational and emotional contemplation based on their observation of products and services and their preferences.

Special Interest magazines - periodicals with a specifically targeted audience with narrowly focused content targeting consumers with similar lifestyles or interests. In essence, special interest magazines are periodicals on specific topics for very specific readers.

Appendix A

Introduction Letter



Rochester Institute of Technology

College of Imaging Arts & Sciences
School of Media Sciences
Frank E. Gannett Hall
69 Lomb Memorial Drive
Rochester, NY 14623-5603
585-475-5992 Fax: 585-475-5336

<Contact>
<Company>
<Address>
<City>, <State> <Zip Code>

<Date>

Dear <Salutation>:

I am writing to ask for your help in an important study being conducted by Ms. Patricia Axford, a graduate student at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) working on her thesis. This study is intended to gather timely, descriptive information regarding reader influence on digital editions for special interest magazines.

You have been identified as an individual within a company publishing a special interest magazine who is knowledgeable influences driving digital editions. If another individual is better suited to respond, please forward this correspondence to them.

Your company is an important part of the special interest magazine printing industry, and has been selected as a sample representative of the industry at-large. Therefore, your response is critical to the validity of the research. In approximately one week, you will receive an invitation by mail to participate in this study by answering several questions. The purpose of this letter is because many people prefer a few days' notice prior to receiving a questionnaire.

This research depends on your generous assistance. As a thank you for your time, you will be offered an executive summary of the results of the study.

If you would like to change the contact information or have questions regarding the study, please email Patricia Axford at pa5636@rit.edu or call XXXX. You may also contact me as I am serving as one of Sandeep's academic thesis advisors: my email is bruce.myers@rit.edu and my direct telephone number is (585) 475-5224. For questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact Ms. Heather Foti, Associate Director of the RIT Human Subjects Research Office at hmfsrs@rit.edu or (585) 475-7673.

Thank you,

Bruce Leigh Myers, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Media Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

Appendix B

Informed Consent

College of Imaging Arts & Sciences
School of Media Sciences
Frank E. Gannett Hall
69 Lomb Memorial Drive
Rochester, NY 14623-5603
585-475-5992 Fax: 585-475-5336

January 9, 2017

<Company>

Attn: <Contact (if Applicable)>

<Address1>

<City>, <State> <Zip>

Dear <Contact or Company>:

I am writing regarding the survey of special interest magazine publishers being conducted by Rochester Institute of Technology. A letter should have been received by you in the past few days introducing you to this research study.

The intention of this study is to gather timely, accurate information about the role customers have in choosing interactive editorial content in your digital editions. Your role will benefit the magazine publishing industry by providing insight on how you are targeting your readers' preferences in digital editions. I believe you are (part of the industry, have valuable knowledge crucial to this study?) Your company was one of the 65 selected, therefore your response is very important to ensure the validity of this research.

Your participation is voluntary and your completion of the survey will indicate your consent. I don't anticipate any risks associated with completing this survey other than those encountered in ordinary life. You may choose not to participate or quit the study at any time without penalty.

If you have any question regarding this study, please call this number (***-***-****) or email pa5636@rit.edu. You may also choose you contact the primary thesis advisor, Bruce Myers at (***-***-****) or blmppr@rit.edu with questions. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant of this study, you may contact Heather Foti, Associate Director of the HSRO at (585) 475-7673 or hmfsrc@rit.edu.

The questionnaire should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and your answers will be kept confidential. This research depends on your (positive adjective maybe: Contributive, Cooperative, Earnest) responses. To show appreciation, an executive summary will be provided for those who participate in the survey.

Sincerely,

Patricia Axford
Graduate Candidate, M.S. Print Media
School of Media Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

Appendix C

Survey

This survey is intended for managers who publish special interest magazines. This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete:

- a) Take the survey
- b) Exit the survey

Please complete the following questions using the one title for which you are most familiar. We are interested in your opinions and initial impressions, and do not expect you to research your answers. Please answer to the best of your ability with your knowledge as a professional.

1. Does the special interest periodical staff create digital editions? (If they select no they exit the survey)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Of the below digital platforms, which does the publication currently utilize? Select all the apply:
 - a. Digital, not browser based, e.g. PDF
 - b. Mobile application
 - c. Web (browser-based) edition
3. Which of the below would you say is the primary motivation for the creation of the digital edition:
 - a. Increased relationship with brand
 - b. Increased purchasing from brand
 - c. Longer engagement with editions
 - d. Remaining competitive in the magazine industry
 - e. Other: _____

4. This question addresses the *benefits realized* from the digital edition:

Which benefits have you noticed have been successful so far? Remember, we are interested in your initial impressions and not carefully researched answers.

- a. Increased relationship with brand
- b. Increased purchasing from brand
- c. Longer engagement with editions
- d. Remaining competitive in the magazine industry
- e. If other please fill in: _____

5. Which of the below tools does the company utilize to better understand its reader base? Select all that apply:

- a. Surveys
- b. Customer reviews
- c. Analytics
- d. Customer relationship management software
- e. Engage on social media
- f. Trend reports from market research

6. Considering the selected tools from the previous question, is increased reader engagement among the intentions of said tools?

- a. Yes
- b. No

7. Does the publication use social media to engage readers?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. (For those who said yes to #7) What is the main goal of Social media for the publication?

- a. Interaction with brand
- b. For readers to influence each other
- c. Increased marketing opportunities
- d. Gain insight into readers needs and expectations

The survey now turns to your perception on the inclusion of interactive features. Many publishers engage readers with interactive features such as videos and hyperlinks.

9. Does the publication use interactive features? (if they select no, then they skip to #15)

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. Considering the possible benefits of interactive features, rank the following in terms of importance: (Click and drag to reorder)

- a. To increase engagement from the readers with the publication
- b. To increase readership
- c. The need to remain competitive in the marketplace
- d. Revenue potential of certain features merits their development or inclusion

11. Which of the following would you consider to be the primary motive leading to development or inclusion of interactive features:

- a. A comparison of competitors' products
- b. Current capabilities of the publication
- c. Requests from customers

12. Please rank the following: Which of the below groups would you consider to be the main driver behind the development of interactive features? (Click and drag to reorder)

- a. Advertisers
- b. Managerial/ leadership team
- c. Readers

13. Please rank the following: Which of the below groups would you consider to be main driver behind the inclusion of interactive features:(Click and drag to reorder)

- a. Advertisers
- b. Managerial/ leadership team
- c. Readers

14. Please rank the below factors that have most supported your advancement in the inclusion of interactive features: (Click and drag to reorder)

- a. Company size
- b. Leadership team
- c. Sustained readership
- d. Resources
- e. Revenue gained

Considering that special interest periodicals are published by a wide variety of organizations, the following questions inquire about the size of the staff focused on the special interest publication that influenced the previous answers, as well as the size of the entire company:

15. How many employees are primarily focused on the digital edition of the special interest magazine in question?

- a. 3 or less
- b. 4 - 8
- c. 9 - 13
- d. 14 or more

16. This question inquires about the number of labor hours dedicated to the digital edition. Labor hours is the sum of all by all of the individuals working in the production of the digital edition.

In your best estimation, how many labor hours are dedicated to produce a single standard digital edition? Please include those employees that may work on the digital edition part-time.

a. Fill in the blank

17. How many titles does the media company produce?

- a. 5 or less
- b. 6-15
- c. 16-20
- d. 21 or more

Appendix D

Reminder Postcard

Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Imaging Arts & Sciences
ATTN: Patricia Axford
69 Lomb Memorial Dr
Rochester, NY 14623-5603

Website:

<https://tinyurl.com/magazineRIT>

A few weeks ago I sent your company a questionnaire regarding your opinions on reader engagement in your special interest publications. I asked for your help because I believe you are a part of the special interest magazine publishing industry. This postcard serves as a reminder to complete the survey.

I am very grateful for your help; this research could not be completed without your generosity.

If you have completed the questionnaire, I sincerely thank you for your response. If you did not receive the link to the questionnaire or it has been misplaced, refer to the link below. If you have questions email myself at pa5636@rit.edu or call me at this dedicated number (XXX)-XXX-XXXX and I would happy to assist you.

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/magazineRIT>

Sincerely,

Patricia Axford

Appendix E

Return Postcard

<Company>
Address 1>
<City>, <State> <Zip>

Pre-Stamped
Postage

Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Imaging Arts & Sciences
School of Media Sciences
ATTN: Patricia Axford
69 Lomb Memorial Dr.
Rochester, NY 14623-5603

School of Media Sciences
Graduate Research
Special Interest Magazine Publishers

I have completed the online survey. I am sending this postcard to ensure my anonymity and to prevent reminder mailings.

☐ Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the results by email at the conclusion of the study. Please send the results to the following email address:
(required) Email address: _____

☐ No, I do not wish to receive a summary of the results at the conclusion of the study.

Appendix F

Raw Data from Survey

Labor hours used to produce editions	
Impossible to calculate due to the amount of crossover work from the print edition	Small (5-under)
No way to tell due to overlapping responsibilities	Small (5-under)
I don't know	Small (5-under)
300	Small (5-under)
10	Small (5-under)
10	Small (5-under)
80	Small (5-under)
1600	Small (5-under)
5	Small (5-under)
7	Small (5-under)
350	Small (5-under)
50	Small (5-under)
6	Small (5-under)
1500	Large (6+)
2	Large (6+)
240	Large (6+)
16	Large (6+)
20	Large (6+)
5	Large (6+)
5	Large (6+)
15	Large (6+)
200	Large (6+)
8	Large (6+)
10	Large (6+)
10	Large (6+)
5	Large (6+)
20	Large (6+)
100	Large (6+)
10	Large (6+)
24	Large (6+)
3	Large (6+)